

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1050

ANSWERED ON:02.03.2016

Optical Fibre Network

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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government had approved crores of rupees for laying optical fibre network in 2011;
- (b) if so, whether the laying of optical fibre network has missed all the deadlines;
- (c) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether the Government has re-examined the project status with a deadline during the current financial year;
- (e) if so, the facts in this regard along with the present status of the project; and
- (f) whether the Government has set up a committee to increase the scope and scale of the project and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) to (f) National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project was planned, in 2011, to connect all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country through Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) utilizing existing fibres of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) and RailTel and laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats (GPs) and Blocks for providing broadband connectivity. The project is being funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and initial estimated cost of the project is Rs. 20,100 Crores. The project is being executed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), namely, Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), which has been incorporated on 25.02.2012 under Indian Companies Act 1956. Under this project, at least 100 Mbps bandwidth has to be provided in all the estimated 2.5 lakh GPs for utilization by all categories of service providers on non-discriminatory basis including Internet Service Providers.

The Project was to be executed in phases. Under Phase-I, one lakh GPs was targeted by 31.03.2015. Considering the vastness of project execution, the very limited resources deployed by the institutions, time required for tendering, mobilisation of physical resources, the budgeted resources, the time line for completion of NOFN project could not be met. The timeline for connecting one lakh GPs with OFC to provide broadband connectivity under Phase-I has been revised to 31.12.2016.

State-wise status of NOFN, as on 31.01.2016, is given in the Statement at Annexure-I.

In order to review the strategy and approach towards speedy implementation of NOFN Project, a Committee was constituted on 14th January, 2015. The Committee submitted its report on 31st March, 2015. The Committee, inter-alia, recommended that the project be renamed as BharatNet to reflect the national aspiration to establish a highly scalable network infrastructure accessible on a non-discriminatory basis to realize the vision of Digital India, in partnership with the States and the private sector. Major recommendations of the Committee are given at Annexure-II.